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PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHUP #1722/01 2881050
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 151050Z OCT 07
FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2083
INFO RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAHQA/OSAF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USAFE RAMSTEIN AB GE PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/AMC SCOTT AFB IL PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 0423
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUDAPEST 001722

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/FO, EUR/NCE MARC NORDBERG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/10/2017
TAGS: [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [NL](#) [HU](#)
SUBJECT: DASD CAGAN'S TALKS WITH THE HUNGARIANS

Classified By: P/E Counselor Eric Gaudiosi; Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. DASD Cagan discussed the upcoming Iraqi Coalition Conference and the potential Hungarian Operational, Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) contribution to the Dutch PRT in meetings with senior Hungarian MOD, MFA and Parliamentary Defense Committee representatives. Stressing the importance of having Hungarian "decision-makers" at the Iraqi Coalition Conference, Cagan urged MOD State Secretary Vadai to attend. Underlining the importance of continued Dutch presence in Afghanistan, Cagan urged the Hungarian interlocutors to quickly move forward with a "agreement in principle" in response to the Dutch request to send an OMLT to Uruzgan Province in August 2008. She also asked the Hungarian MOD to consider deploying a small contingent of their Special Operations unit to Uruzgan with the OMLT. In a follow-up meeting with the Ambassador and Karoly Banai, the Prime Minister's Security and Foreign Policy advisor, the Hungarians were persuaded as Banai said he is preparing a memo to the Prime Minister recommending approval, specifically citing the upcoming EU meetings October 18-19 as his deadline for giving the GoNL an indication of Hungary's agreement. All three Hungarian representatives requested support for Hungary's offer to base the Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC) C-17s at Papa Airbase. DASD Cagan stated, that although not in her portfolio, she would convey the message to Washington. End summary.

12. (C) In a meeting with MOD State Secretary Agnes Vadai and Deputy CHOD, General Mikita, DASD Cagan, joined by the Ambassador, stressed the importance of the Iraqi Coalition Conference scheduled for October 29-31 in Bahrain. Outlining the theme of the Conference to transition to the next stage in Iraq, Cagan noted, that with senior-level NATO, EU and UN representation, Hungary needed "decision-makers" at the conference. Commenting that this is less about operations and more about policy, Cagan urged Vadai to attend. (Note. The Hungarian MOD plans to send the Operations Center Director, Brigadier General Szucs; Post views Szucs as an inappropriate representative for this conference. In an October 10 follow-on meeting with the Prime Minister's Security and Foreign Policy advisor, Karoly Banai, the Ambassador encouraged that both Banai and Vadai represent Hungary at the Conference. Banai expressed interest and undertook to check his calendar for conflicts and to coordinate with Vadai. End note.) Praising Hungary's role in NATO's Iraqi training mission, Cagan asked Hungary to

consider expanding their role, sending trainers to help establish professional military development. Briefly providing an overview of Hungarian deployments outside the country, as well as comments on the personnel and resource constraints faced by the military, Vadai informed the Ambassador and the DASD that Hungary will officially announce a six-month extension of their Iraqi training commitment at the upcoming NATO ministerial on October 24. She stated that additional commitments would require some regrouping to remain close to the five-party agreement on a 1000 troop force deployment ceiling outside of Hungary. While she appreciated the offer to attend the Coalition Conference, Vadai did not commit to attending.

13. (C) Expressing gratitude for Hungary's PRT efforts in Baghlan Province, Cagan encouraged the Hungarians to consider a plus-up to their civilian, MFA staff to help with more Provincial development projects. Continuing, Cagan outlined current political efforts to help the Dutch Government maintain their presence in Afghanistan beyond August 2008. Stating "we need your help and the Dutch need your help," Cagan urged a Hungarian "agreement in principle" within the week to provide a 20-person OMLT next August. Such a decision would provide essential support to the Dutch in their upcoming political decision process on their own Afghan mission. Cagan noted that the Dutch have committed to provide training and equipment for the OMLT, whose focus would be mentoring the Afghan National Army in Uruzgan. As a further incentive, Cagan said she understood that the Dutch had discussed waiving the debt (approximately 3 million Euros) related to Dutch equipment and infrastructure remaining in Baghlan Province, now used by the Hungarian PRT. She also understood that the Dutch would support Hungary's proposal to bed-down the SAC C-17s at Papa Airbase. The DASD also suggested that the Hungarians send a small, 5-10 person Special Operations contingent to provide force protection for the OMLT. Cagan said the U.S. would look at financial assistance for the special forces, as well as equipment loans, if the Hungarians deploy SF personnel to either Afghanistan or Iraq.

14. (C) Vadai began her response by commenting on the complementary relationship between "America's dynamism and Europe's patience," and stating that Hungary wants to be a good member of NATO, sharing the "burden of security." Acknowledging the DASD's comment that "success in Afghanistan is very important for NATO," Vadai stated she would discuss the request with her military leadership over the next two days to assess the military capabilities. Vadai commented that "there are supporters and non-supporters of an OMLT deployment and we have to be very careful as to expectations and risks." Additionally, recognizing the timing issue related to the Dutch Government's decision, she noted that the OMLT deployment would require a discussion with the Prime Minister and a five-party agreement through an open, and democratic process. On the SF deployment recommendation, Vadai said they need more time to understand the issue and to talk to the Dutch concerning operational aspects. She reiterated that the planned SF deployment, now scheduled for the October-November 2008 time frame is without caveats. Such a deployment will be more dangerous and "we need to make our citizens understand that this is a different world." (Comment: Post believes the Hungarians are more likely to address OMLT force protection requirements with other, non-SF units. End comment.)

15. (C) In both meetings with the MFA Security Policy and Non-Proliferation Department Deputy Director, Gabor Horvath, and Parliamentary Defense Committee Chairman, Janos Lazar, the DASD again thanked the Hungarians for their support in Afghanistan and Iraq. Noting the urgent decision timeline, she outlined the request for a Hungarian OMLT with the Dutch. Horvath noted that the Dutch Foreign Minister was in Budapest last week and one discussion topic concerned the proposed deployment. He believes there is little hesitance at the political level, stating "Hungary is a committed ally, even with its modest capabilities." Referencing the Coalition conference, Horvath stated the MFA had not yet

decided on a representative. (Note. In a follow-on meeting with PolOff, Horvath stated that the MFA would find it difficult to send a representative, as the estimated 10,000 dollar cost was an issue with constrained Ministry finances. End Note.)

¶16. (C) Lazar thanked the DASD for the trust and honesty to share information on the Afghan issue. He reconfirmed that a Parliamentary vote is not required for the OMLT deployment, but noted the practice of every government since 1990 to obtain parliamentary party consensus on such proposals. Speaking in his role as an opposition FIDESZ member, as well as Defense Committee Chairman, Lazar foresees no obstacles, stating "such consensus would take only 10 minutes." Lazar stated Hungary takes their military and civil responsibilities seriously and words and deeds are important, "either we are a NATO member, or not." He believes that Hungarian soldiers are up to the proposed tasks, and Hungary is committed to the West and trans-atlantic cooperation.

¶17. (SBU) Not surprisingly, the Hungarians raised the C-17 basing issue at each of the three meetings. The consistent message - "This decision is good for NATO, which has a strategic airlift shortfall. Our offer provides a robust NATO footprint in the region that is currently missing. We want to do more than participate, we want to contribute. We don't 'want to be there, but not be there.'" DASD Cagan noted the Hungarian views and acknowledged the importance to the Alliance and Hungary. Although outside her portfolio, she agreed to carry the message back to Washington, underlining again U.S. thanks for Hungarian contributions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

¶18. (C) Comment. The Hungarians are moving closer to a decision on the OMLT deployment in a fairly quick manner. They understand the connection with the Dutch decision. Banai told the Ambassador he hopes the Prime Minister will be able to deliver a positive response to his Dutch counterpart during the EU Ministerial on October 19. Although the Hungarians held discussions about a possible OMLT with the Germans in the north, a decision to support the Dutch would be a positive step - both politically to help the Dutch, and operationally for coalition operations in Afghanistan. Although they have not linked the issue to our decision on Papa, senior officials across the political spectrum continue to look forward to our favorable decision.

¶19. (U) DASD Cagan has cleared on this cable.
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